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May Day Greetings to the Spanish Workers

May Day 1886 - 1937
Herbert Zam

Analyses of the Special Convention
I. Advance In Chicago
Samuel Romer and Hal Siegel

II. Towards a Revolutionary Socialist Party
Max Shachtman

III. For A United Revolutionary Mass Party
Gus Tyler

Five to Four
David P. Berenberg

The Underground Movement in Germany
Anonymous

may 1937
vol. 6 no. 1
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May Day Greetings to the Spanish Workers

THE Spanish workers will celebrate May Day after having scored a decisive victory in the running of the Bilbao blockade, and the international proletariat also has good cause for celebrating. This victory is not a victory over the rebels, but a victory over British treachery, a victory over Britain's efforts to create a stalemate in Spain by the exhaustion of both sides, so that British imperialism may then become the mediator and lord over concessions.

The role of England in the Spanish civil war must serve as a forewarning of the role which capitalists can and will play in any struggle involving workers on one side and capitalists and their allies on the other—whether such a struggle comes in the form of a civil war, as in Spain, or in the form of a war between the Soviet Union and an imperialist nation. In the last analysis, an imperialist country will do what will preserve, protect and promote imperialism. No imperialist country will prefer the rise of a socialist republic—in Spain or elsewhere. The capitalist countries vastly preferred autocratic Russia to Soviet Russia, not only because their own concessions and investments were lost, but because the end of capitalism in Russia, the breach in the imperialist wall made by the Russian workers, might become widened and extended until it reached also the "democratic" countries, like England, and France, and the United States. Let the Russian workers take heed.

The Spanish workers will celebrate their May Day in the midst of a destructive civil war. They will be celebrating it in common with the millions of the international proletariat for whom it is a symbol of international proletarian solidarity. It will be very much in place for them on this occasion to remind the international proletariat of its duty to the Spanish workers, a duty which had been recognized in words, neglected in practice. It will not be at all out of place to inquire of the powerful British trade union movement and Labor Party why they have done so little to help the Spanish workers; to inquire of the French Federation of Labor, of the Socialist Party, of the Communist Party, why they permit the government, which exists by their grace, to play such a treacherous role against Spain.

Celebrating May Day in the midst of a civil war between workers and feudal-capitalist-fascist alliance, the Spanish workers will have to consider their own future path. May Day has always been a day of re-dedicating ourselves to the struggle for Socialism. Will the Spanish masses permit their sacrifices, which are about to be crowned with military success, to be dissipated through the restoration of a meaningless "democracy?" Will they permit the capitalists to come back to the factories, the landlords to take back their land, the politicians who serve the wealthy classes to take over the government? That is what the restoration of democracy would mean. The Spanish masses can fire the international proletariat as the Russian masses did in 1917, by dedicating their struggle, on May Day, 1937, to the achievement of a socialist republic, which would serve as an inspiration to the workers throughout the world to renew the struggle for Socialism and to continue it to a successful end.

May Day 1886-1937

Herbert Zam

THIS year the American working class will celebrate May Day fifty-one years since its formal inauguration in the United States as a day devoted to advancing the cause of the proletariat. In two years, the international proletariat will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of May Day as an International Day of Proletarian Struggle by the Socialist International at its founding Congress in Paris in 1889. The inauguration of May Day symbolized the birth of a militant proletariat in this country, which, in 1886, already felt strong enough to take the field against American capitalism in what was then a revolutionary struggle, the struggle for the eight-hour day. May Day, 1937, again finds the American workers taking the field against capitalism. As in 1886, a wave of strikes is sweeping the country. Millions of workers are turning toward organization as their mutual weapon against oppression and exploitation. No longer cringing and begging, which were the primary methods developed under William Green during the era of "prosperity," but fighting, defiant, militant, using newer and more effective methods of struggle, the American proletariat is completing the task which it only began fifty years ago. The sit-down strike, symbol not only of labor militancy, but also forerunner of the time when the workers will sit in the factory as the owners, will go down in history as the emblem of May Day, 1937.

But there is also a vast difference between the battles the American workers carried on in 1886 and those they are engaged in today. In 1886 they had to fight against a capitalist class which was only beginning to realize its own strength and power, which was only entering upon the field of world power. American capitalism, after having crushed the power of the slave-owning feudal South, had entered upon a period of industrial expansion never before equaled. Capitalism was rising, expanding, triumphing over all obstacles. Its future was still ahead of it. But today American capitalism is not only part of a world system of declining, of decaying capitalism; it itself already bears the earmarks of a decadent social order. It can no longer supply work to its wage slaves, a vast number of whom it must keep alive by "relief" and "created work," along the lines of the "bread and circuses" of decadent Rome. Where the cry in its days of vigor was for ever more production, for an unceasing expansion of the means of production, today capitalism is compelled to limit production, to slow up the expansion of the productive plant because the contradictions of capitalism, magnified in its old age, do not permit its slaves to consume that which they have first produced. In 1886, capitalism was able to smash the first national assault of the workers because capitalism was young and vigorous and growing while the working class was still immature and unorganized. But today a well-organized proletariat confronts senile capitalism whose

symbol has become "nine old men."

The struggle for the eight-hour day, which began in 1886, marked the change from one type of organization of the workers to another. Today, 1937, finds a similar process going on. In 1886 the Knights of Labor was the dominant organization of the workers. It had a near-revolutionary program and good traditions. But it was a mass organization, a mixture of trade union, educational and political features, with no apparatus to guide any concrete movement for betterment of conditions of labor. When confronted with a movement of struggle of the workers, it forgot all about its program, and practically collapsed. Ever since the panic of 1873, the American workers had been extremely restive. The depression of 1884-5 created a large number of unemployed workers and gave rise to the demand for the shortening of the working day. As soon as the workers began to sense the beginnings of industrial recovery, a wave of strikes swept the country. During the years 1881-84 less than 500 strikes involving some 150,000 workers, took place yearly. In 1885, this number had increased to 700 strikes and 250,000 workers. In 1886 there were over 1500 strikes involving 600,000 workers. During this period ,the labor organizations grew by leaps and bounds. The Knights of Labor increased in membership from 200,000 to 700,000. The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions also grew, but not nearly so rapidly. Everyone expected the Knights to assume leadership of the struggle and expand it. But the Knights did practically nothing. Instead of going forward, it tried to stand still and—collapsed. The American Federation of Labor (as the F.O.T.L. became known later) on the other hand, based itself on the new factors in the situation and was able to survive. The Knights failed because they could not adapt themselves to the craft consciousness of the newly created proletariat, which represented the beginnings of class consciousness.

A certain parallel exists between the A.F. of L. - C.I.O. struggle today and the Knights-Federation struggle of 1886. The A.F. of L. is also trying to stand still. Confronted with a tremendous wave of organization as early as 1933, it failed to understand the need for new methods of organization, and consequently was unable to benefit from the desire of new millions of workers to organize. It was bound by its craft traditions at a time when craft forms had become obsolete. In this respect, the C.I.O today occupies the place which the Federation held in 1886. It has utilized the new method—industrial organization, as against craft organization, and therefore is reaching the millions which the Federation today repels. But the parallel ends here. For the American Federation of Labor, unlike the Knights of Labor, is a stable, firmly knit organization with a very extensive base in a limited number of industries and trades, industries having millions of workers in them. However, its individual units show no signs of disintegration, except in some fields where its units have always been parasitic, class-collaborationist, bureaucratically controlled general offices, like the Boot and Shoe Workers and the Leather Workers. But these were never the general base, nor the dominant groups in the Federation. The skilled building trades, metal trades and printing trades, long the backbone of the organized labor movement in this country, are still loyal to the Federation and to the fetish of craft unionism; and they are all genuine trade unions. Nor is it out of the question for the Federation to make some advances, al-

though of a limited character, in the formation of industrial unions in some fields, even if only as spite organizations. It would therefore be, not only foolhardy, but contrary to the interests of the organized workers to consign the American Federation of Labor to the graveyard of history. Its methods may be so consigned, but the organization will continue to live.

The interests of the American working class can best be served by having a single trade union movement, but it must be a movement which permits and promotes the organization of the unorganized and the transformation of the craft unions into industrial unions. Until the re-unification of the American labor movement on that basis is possible, the two organizations will probably continue to exist, not necessarily mutually exclusive, but unfortunately, mutually at war on frequent occasions.

But the C.I.O. was a historic necessity and is historically justified. It represents the next step for the American working class in organization, and in general it marks the transformation from craft to industrial consciousness. This in itself is not the complete picture. Industrial unionism is not an end in itself, but only a more efficient means to an end, the end being the eventual emancipation of the working class from wage slavery. As the American Federation played a role in the shaping of the working class, the C.I.O. is helping the development of the working class from trade to class consciousness, from the mere recognition by the workers that they constitute a class separate and apart from the ruling class, to the recognition that as such a class they must become the agency for the transformation of society from one based on exploitation to one based on cooperation.

Class consciousness cannot be completely realized through economic struggle. The political implications of the economic struggle are essential for this development. In all periods of working class upheaval, there have been groping attempts at a coordination of these two avenues of progress for the workers. As early as the post-Civil War years, when the National Labor Union was founded by William H. Sylvis, the need for independent political action by the workers was realized. The first convention of this organization, in 1866, declared in favor of independent political action to secure the legal passage of the eight-hour day, and for "the election of men pledged to sustain and represent the interests of the industrial classes."

In New York State, the labor upsurge in connection with the fight for the 8-hour day was climaxed with the formation of the United Labor Party under Henry George. Not only the Knights of Labor, but numerous other unions participated in the formation of the People's Party. The 1893 convention of the American Federation of Labor, still feeling the ground swell of labor upsurge, upon the initiative of the socialists, adopted a resolution approving the action of the British labor unions in organizing a Labor Party, adopted a platform and called upon the affiliated organizations to unite for "political labor movement." Not only the treachery of Gompers and his fellow conservatives, but also the mistakes of the socialists, and above all the sectarianism of the De Leon wing of the socialist movement, prevented the formation at that time of a broad labor party based upon the trade unions, which would have helped promote the independent political action of the American workers and prepare them for Socialism.

Today also, the labor upsurge on the economic field needs to be supplemented

by independent labor action on the political field in order to cement an independent working class standing in opposition to capitalism and all its parties. Else, there is every danger that industrial unionism will be transormed into "pure and simple" unionism, as Gompers succeeded in transforming the craft unions. The formation of a Labor Party in this country is needed to complete the historic process of the fashioning of a class conscious proletariat which, under the leadership of a revolutionary Socialist Party, becomes the "gravedigger of capitalism." We have the advantage of a militant working class unequaled anywhere in the world. But militancy alone is not enough. From militant action to revolutionary action—that must be the course of the American workers. And the socialists, those who have already traveled this road, must not stand by and wait until the mass of the workers find it for themselves. They must guide them to it, and over it, as a guarantee that they will truly march toward Socialism. To avoid the opportunism of a Gompers, to avoid the sectarianism of a De Leon, to be in close contact with the workers, to be not afraid to swim against the stream, these are essential aspects of the fight for the masses, of the fight for Socialism.

May Day, 1937, is being celebrated in the shadow of the next war. Everywhere the armaments race is in progress. The imperialist powers and their satellites are already maneuvering for position. Treaties are made and broken in the process. May Day, which from its inception was a day of international proletarian solidarity, must be made a day of proletarian struggle against imperialist war and imperialist war preparations. In 1890, Engels wrote enthusiastically about the May Day demonstrations: "The spectacle we are now witnessing will make the capitalists and the landlords of all lands realize that today the proletarians of all lands are, in truth, united. If only Marx were with me to see it with his own eyes!" Perhaps it is well that neither Marx nor Engels were alive to witness the spectacle of August 1914, when international solidarity was forgotten by so many of its proponents and class peace became a common "socialist" practice. In such an atmosphere, there was no need for May Day. The leaders of the German Social Democratic Party issued an appeal to the German workers to abstain from demonstrations!

But in spite of the capitulation to the jingo war spirit of the majority of the European socialist parties, the revolutionary struggle against the war continued. In April 1915, the socialist youth of the world held a congress at Berne and issued a ringing declaration against the war. This was followed by the Zimmerwald Congress of the anti-war socialists in September. The Berner "Tagwacht," on May 31, printed a May Day appeal written by the revolutionary socialist Karl Liebknecht under the slogan "Der Hauptfeind steht in Eigenen Land"—the enemy is at home. A detested minority in 1915, the Liebknecht group, because of its courageous struggle against war, had become powerful enough to be able to stage a monster anti-war demonstration in Berlin, on May Day, 1916. In Russia the Bolsheviks and other socialist groups, in England the Independent Labor Party, in France strong socialist minorities, in Italy the overwhelming majority of the Socialist Party—all carried on an unceasing struggle against the war. In America, the Socialist Party had from the first denounced the war. The day after the United States entered the war, the Socialist Party met in special con-

vention and adopted the historic St. Louis anti-war declaration, a ringing denunciation of the war and a ringing challenge to capitalism. Numerous socialists, the outstanding being Eugene V. Debs, the leader of Socialism in this country, were imprisoned, persecuted; papers were suppressed, meetings were broken up by inflamed mobs, but still the fight against the war continued, until the victory of the workers and peasants in Russia made the first breach in the imperialist wall which eventually led to the ending of the war.

Today, in the shadow of the next war, we must prepare to play our role as these heroes did. No more prophetic lines can be quoted describing our own situation today than the lines written by the famous German (and international) revolutionary socialist, Rosa Luxemburg, in a May Day article in 1913:

> "At this moment of frenzied military preparations and of war orgies it is only the resolute fighting stand of the working masses, their ability and readiness for powerful mass action, which still maintains world peace. . . . The sooner the world idea of resolute mass action as demonstrations of international solidarity and as a fighting tactic for peace and for socialism . . . strikes root, the greater guarantee we shall have that from the world war, which will inevitably take place sooner or later, there will result an ultimate victorious settlement between the world of labor and that of capital."

It is in this spirit that the Chicago Convention of the American Socialist Party, March 1937, called upon the working class to make the outbreak of the next war "an occasion for social revolution." Rosa Luxemburg's prophecy of the final settlement between labor and capital was not entirely completed, because the important socialist parties were not prepared to assume the leadership over the working class striving for social revolution, and only in a single country was the social revolution successful. But even before a new war breaks out, there are ample calls upon the proletariat to demonstrate its international solidarity. The Spanish workers are today carrying on a war, not only against the fascists and capitalists of their own country, but also against the armies of Germany and Italy, while at the same time they are being betrayed by their "Democratic" sister republics, England and France and the United States. Only the independent action of the organized working class can really help the Spanish workers in their fight. The same "friends" which are today betraying Spain, will inevitably betray the only workers' country today in the event of a new world war. In spite of the serious errors which the leadership of the Soviet Union is committing in its internal and external policies, in spite of the distortions of the proletarian regime and the deviations from true workers' democracy, in spite of the reliance upon capitalist countries for support and the lack of faith in the workers, it is the duty of the international proletariat to rally to the defense of the Soviet Union and make reliance upon false friends unnecessary.

May Day is a workers' holiday, a day of struggle for the new society, a day of separation of the workers from their exploiters. From the first, even at the moment when May Day was the symbol of the struggle for the eight-hour day, the struggle for the new society was incorporated as a living part of May Day. The Haymarket anarchists, those martyrs of the American working class, whose blood has become part of the cement binding the workers together, did not give their lives merely for a shorter working day. It is the vision of the new society toward which they were marching which kept them

steadfast. At the first monster mass demonstration in Union Square, New York, in 1890, the resolution adopted significantly declared: "While struggling for the eight-hour day we will not lose sight of the ultimate aim—the abolition of the wage system." And the Zurich Congress of the Socialist International, in 1893, affirmed this in its resolution: "The demonstration on May First for the eight-hour day must serve at the same time as a demonstration of the determined will of the working class to destroy class distinctions through social change and thus enter on the road, the only road leading to peace for all peoples, to international peace."

If, in 1893, this represented only a distant goal, today it is an immediate objective. We are celebrating May Day not in the period of the growth of capitalism, but of its decline; not in the period when capitalism could parade as progressive and democratic, but when it has already become decadent and reactionary, when fascism is its best expression. The fight against fascism, against capitalist reaction can be successful only as a fight of the working class against capitalism, as a fight for Socialism. May Day is no "peoples" holiday, no occasion for carrying both the red flag of the class struggle and the national flag of class peace. It is a day of war, not of peace—war of the workers against the capitalists. Under the red flag, singing the "International," the workers all over the world are marching forward to Socialism on May Day, 1937.

Chicago, Ill.
April 19, 1937.

Anna Bercowitz
David P. Berenberg } Editors.

Dear Comrades:

This is to inform you that by a motion of Norman Thomas and by resolution drafted by the preceding N.E.C. and passed by the special convention meeting in Chicago, the convention received with regret your resignation and expressed their deep appreciation for the services rendered by you in behalf of the Socialist Party through the American Socialist Monthly.

Fraternally yours,

Frank N. Trager,
Labor and Organization Secretary,
Socialist Party of the U. S. A.

* * *

After five years devoted to the American Socialist Quarterly, which they founded together with Haim Kantorovitch, and later to the American Socialist Monthly, David P. Berenberg and Anna Bercowitz have found it necessary, for personal reasons, to resign from the editorial work of the monthly. Anna Bercowitz must leave New York, and David Berenberg must devote himself to a special piece of work next year. They leave with profound regret. The new N.E.C., at its meeting May 8 - 9, will appoint a new editorial staff and a new managing editor.

Analyses of the Special Convention

I.

Advance in Chicago

Samuel Romer and Hal Siegel

DURING the course of a militant, glorious life, the Socialist Party of the United States has more than once decided upon a definite re-adaptation of its tactical line. The victory of the workers in the October revolution caused one such change; the defeat of our German and Austrian comrades caused another. In the same way, the lessons of the La Follette movement of 1924 and the recent recognition by many elements of the organized labor unions of the necessity for independent political action were each responsible for a re-audit of the party tactics and machinery. It is in this acceptance of the duty of constant vigilance that the party remains a vital and healthy element in American life. So long as it acknowledges that change in tactics may be necessary under different conditions, it offers a vehicle for socialists of various opinions to carry on in the great task before us.

It is such a re-audit that the party has endured since 1931. McDonald's desertion, Hitler's seizure of power, the military defeat of the heroic Austrian proletariat, the general offensive of fascism, accompanied by a recognition of the impotence of a capitalist League of Nations as a positive force for peace and progress, and the failure of the powerful British and Scandinavian movements to make appreciable progress toward the final victory, all led to a gradual but definite theoretical change in the party line from a *laissez faire* policy that Socialism will come somehow and sometime, to the revolutionary position that capitalism and its ruling class must be overthrown through direct, militant action of an organized, socialist working-class. During this period of theoretical advance, there was no parallel attempt to alter the structure of the party that would translate the new theory into actual party life. Good and better resolutions were passed, but they remained on paper. The party machinery still continued to function as it did through the twenties — cumbersome, indefinite, loose. It was to remedy this that the National Executive Committee of the party called the special March convention at Chicago—to reduce the lag between revolutionary theory and reformist practice, to make of the party a tighter, more centralized organization with greater capacity for discipline.

Along with this period of inner-party discussion and theoretical change, there were occurring realignments in the American scene that vitally affected the party. Within the labor unions there became apparent a revitalization that had for its aim the organization of the workers in the mass production industries. Added to this upsurge were the lessons of the depression and of the common revolt against Hooverism which soon discovered that politicians tied to the capitalist apron strings were disloyal to the glib election promises they had spouted. A movement began which today is in ever higher and higher speed for class political action—"as we fight together, so must we vote together." How was the party best to channelize

this upsurge into preparation for revolutionary action?

Then, too, there was the depression growth of the fraternal and cultural organizations of the working-class. Realizing that the "new capitalism" of Carver and other economists (that the workers of today would be the capitalists of tomorrow) was pure "hooey," the workers began to draw closer together, to recognize their own class interests in cultural and social relationships. But the party was unprepared to work with any degree of intelligent direction toward the spreading of the ideals of Socialism in these organizations. Party members in these groups were frequently unknown to one another and, as each worked in his own peculiar way to win converts for the cause, were often at cross-purposes and negated each other. Even in the trade-unions, despite voluntary socialist leagues and similar groups of party members, occasion arose, over and over again, where party members, all working for the same end, nullified their efforts in individually striving for different immediate propositions. This, then, was the second task of the convention, as prescribed by the call for it: determination of the party's attitude toward mass organizations and the formation of an adequate structure that would enable the party to recruit and enhance its prestige with some semblance of efficiency.

In addition, a third problem was posed before the convention that was not mentioned in the N.E.C. call—that of factionalism. There has been within the party for many years a group that adopted the "purist" position of DeLeon against immediate demands and any fight for reforms within the capitalist system. This group had always been an insignificant minority and was usually laughed out of court as a freakish development of the movement. During the past year, however, especially after the Cleveland convention, there entered into the party a number of members of the former Workers Party who, through the ego-satisfying device of empty phrase-mongering, arrived at the same conclusion as did the "single-plankers." A strange united-front between these two groups was effected throughout the party (for instance, the vote against the Labor Party resolution); through the publication of their own inner-party organ and through the formation of their own membership group, these comrades, essentially sectarian in outlook and practice, raised their status to that of an important minority group.

To this action, of course, there was reaction. Many comrades felt that the seeds of sectarianism, if allowed to grow, would produce a harvest that would mean the eventual decline of the party. There were, of course, differences as to how to abort this growth; some felt that it must be plowed under, others that by allowing it freedom the dandelion would blossom into a rose. This division took place throughout the country; in Local New York, it took the form of an open split in the Militant group that had been the chief force in the fight for a revolutionary theoretical position. The majority in New York, including practically all those who held responsible positions in the mass organizations of the working class, while eager to work with every comrade, advocated no compromise with the policies of sectarianism; the minority, including some who loved labels better than truth itself, sought to ride both horses. Factionalism immediately became rampant throughout the party; the Local New York minority began the publication of its own internal organ; slander and abuse took the place of comradely discussion; the "red her-

ring" of a possible split was raised by the sectarians (and, parenthetically, it may be remarked that the question of expulsion of this group, to the extent that it became an issue, was a direct result of their own hysteria,—the question never even appeared on the floor of the convention); the chief issues before the convention were obscured and false issues placed into prominence. During this period, constructive party work was reduced to a bare minimum; petty bickering and guerrila factional warfare transformed the party into an inglorious debating sect. Before the Chicago convention, the question was posed clearly: how to stop this disgraceful condition and restore the party to health.

These, then, were the primary issues before the Chicago convention—and any honest evaluation of the convention must be chiefly concerned with the accomplishments of the delegates in relation to these issues. And it is to the credit of the delegates, representing essentially the same healthy, sane revolutionary spirit that characterized the struggle against the Old Guard, that as a whole they met these issues squarely and spoke forth in unequivocal terms, as best they could.

The party came forth from Chicago with practically an entirely new structure. Although the delegates were alert and vigilant to guard against any attempt to substitute a central bureaucracy for the previous loose autonomy of state organization, they did not blind themselves to the need for a more efficient, more powerful organization. In line with the conception of the party as a continual living force, rather than a mere electoral organization, a resident National Action Committee with wide power was provided. Party membership was transformed from a paper allegiance into a new conception of socialist duty and socialist work. The question of the party press, which plagued the party even in the old days, was answered with a party-owned and party-controlled press, under the direction of the national executive committee, which would present a uniform line on the questions of the day. Measures were taken to provide a sound financial base for the work of the National Office. The establishment of a new standard of party responsibility is in itself conducive of a greater, more stable positive party discipline. If we might lift an idea from the magazine advertisements, we would say that Chicago offered "a stream-lined party for a stream-lined age."

The changes in party structure answered in part the second question before the convention, that of our relation to mass organizations. The new structure provides for a more mobile, more efficient party; an organization that can move smoothly and quickly. But, more important, the convention reaffirmed the theoretical position of the party more clearly and decisively than ever before. On the Farmer-Labor party, it moved a forthright resolution that expressed the necessity of socialists mobilizing their entire forces for the establishment of such a party as the next step for the American workers; at the same time, the resolution clearly declared that the party had an independent role to play within the Farmer-Labor party for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the socialist commonwealth. On war, the convention warned against pacifism, or the acceptance of "progressive" slogans that would involve class collaboration and the cessation of the class struggle. At the same time, it decisively rejected the position of the minority that would have meant hopeless isolation from the common masses of America.

For the first time in recent history, the convention adopted an unequivocal proposition that socialists in trade unions and other mass organizations are to act in a coordinated manner, serving as the rallying centers of progressive forces within the union movement. Although the labor resolution as finally adopted is open to criticism, particularly as it walks a precarious tight-rope on the Committee for Industrial Organization, it presents what is essentially a healthy perspective—unified work by socialists to make these organizations a fighting force against capitalism and its reactionary spawn.

On the question of factionalism, the convention acted as clearly as it could by adopting a resolution which banned inner-party factional organs and in their stead substituted an official national paper for the discussion of controversial theoretical issues. It is significant that this resolution was adopted by unanimous agreement; it is also quite as significant that this unanimity was forthcoming only after it was clearly demonstrated that the resolution would pass by an overwhelming majority, whether agreement was reached or otherwise. Perhaps one of the most optimistic signs for the future of the party was the reaction of the delegates against the fatal implications of intense factionalism; they rose as a mighty force against its continuance within the party and for a return to healthy mass work instead of internal wrangling.

One important criticism must be incorporated in this evaluation (It is unfortunate that space limitations do not permit the discussion of other questions that were placed before it.) The experiment practiced with the agenda, which provided two extended debates on each question, meant that the delegates were unable to reach final decisions on many problems which, at the close, were still in committee. It is of the character of irony that a convention, which set before itself the task of bringing efficient mobility into the party machinery, should proceed in so sloppy and roundabout a manner. If the more orthodox method of discussion were somewhat unsatisfactory, at least it provided a means of getting final action. The Chicago convention was the laboratory of a noble experiment—but even guinea pigs have been known to squeal.

In summary, one important point, all-important, should be emphasized. The true evaluation of the convention, of course, cannot come within the next month; as with every convention, its accomplishments can only be tested pragmatically and in our daily life. Fine resolutions will wither away if left on the paper they are written on; it remains for the party membership to translate these resolutions into their routine activity. Too, under the new structural centralism of the party, a serious responsibility rests upon the personnel of the national office and the N.E.C.; they have power to negate the party will or else carry out these decisions in a spirit that will make Socialism an important, vital part of the labor movement today. It is necessary to warn that the banning of fractional organs does not itself halt factionalism; it is up to the party membership to devote itself not so much to introspection and a growing inwardness but to carry the socialist torch forth to the working masses of America.

The Militants, today the veterans of the party organization, have a steadfast faith that the party membership will proceed in its work now with the enthusiasm, the loyalty and the toleration that must be the qualities of every revolutionary party; in this party lies the future of Socialism in America!

II.

Towards a Revolutionary Socialist Party

Max Shachtman

THAT the party's emergency convention in Chicago was a distinct step forward towards converting it into an effective revolutionary instrument in the class struggle, can be disputed only by those who measure by abstract idealistic criteria and fail to judge parties as living organisms in the process of developing. It is possible to cast up a balance sheet of this convention on a sound, objective basis if only because, unlike the two preceding conventions, the political problems facing the party were not obscured and confused by the superficial—even if exigent—organizational wrangles between the Old Guard and its adversaries. Such a balance-sheet will show, I think, that while the convention adopted policies which bring the Socialist Party of the United States closer to the position of revolutionary Marxism than any party of the Second or Third Internationals —which is not as much a compliment as it might be, alas, in view of the wretched stand the others have taken on all crucial questions—it nevertheless did not fully accomplish the job that the conditions in which it functions so urgently press upon it.

To dispose of one matter immediately in order to permit an evaluation of the decisive political problems before the convention, let us start by noting that one of the questions which was so greatly agitated before the convention, both within and without the party, was resolved, so to speak, by not even being taken up, however paradoxical this may sound. For many weeks before the delegates convened, the Communist Party had carried on a virulent campaign "for the expulsion of the Trotskyists from the Socialist Party." Unfortunately, this drive, carried on in the best traditions of red-baiting campaigns, found support to one degree or another inside the ranks of the party itself, and was not always confined to obscure comrades.

The goal of this movement was transparent from the very outset. By labelling every revolutionary socialist idea and everybody who holds it with what they consider the odious name of "Trotskyism," the Stalinists hoped to frighten the party into driving out every militant who refuses to identify Marxism with the C. P.'s distortion of it, class struggle with class collaboration or its most modern guise, the People's Front, militant struggle against imperialist war with the communists' support of "democratic" capitalist marauders. The success of the Stalinist drive could only have brought the revolutionary forward development of the Socialist Party to an abrupt halt and turned it in the opposite direction. It is a good index of the temper of the party's ranks and of the convention delegates they so everwhelmingly elected, that all the quivering hopes raised in some quarters and the mumbled threats and demands made in others, were utterly thwarted in the convention. Throughout its sessions, not a single voice was raised to put directly before the delegates a proposal for the expulsion of socalled "Trotskyists," an action which would have made the advocacy

of revolutionary Socialism as incompatible with membership in our party as it is in the Communist Party.

The same temper was manifest in the consideration of the party's position on war. Here is a question of such decisive importance that a false position on it destroyed the Second International, as we know, in the crucial years of the World War and, likewise, is now leading both Internationals to another catastrophe. The two resolutions submitted to the convention on this question clearly marked off the revolutionary and the reformist standpoints. The first made clear that modern wars are rooted not in this or that governmental form but in capitalist imperialism itself and that the one cannot be eliminated without unremitting struggle against the other. It was unambiguous in its statement that the Socialist Party would not support *any* capitalist government in *any* war, even if conducted under the shibboleth of "democracy against fascism," or even if one power is allied with the Soviet Union.

Not that the Socialist Party is indifferent to the defense of the first workers' republic. Quite the contrary. Precisely because it is really concerned with an effective, proletarian defense of the Soviet Republic, the resolution emphasized that the working class must not give up its independence and become a part of the capitalist war machinery just because one imperialist power, in fighting a war against another, may be allied, temporarily and for its own reactionary reasons, with the Soviet Union.

The resolution also rejected all the deceptive nostrums advocated for the "prevention of war" under capitalism, including the treacherous League of Nations, capitalist sanctions, "collective security," "neutrality legislation" and the self-imposed fetters of pacifism. Finally, it reiterated the classic Marxian position that if war should break out despite all our efforts, the Socialist Party must utilize the ensuing social crisis for the purpose of overturning the capitalist order by revolutionary means in order to bring war and its cause to an end. Its superiority over any resolution ever adopted before by the party is further attested by the careful and imperative distinction it makes between imperialist wars, which it is a crime to support, and civil wars of workers against reaction, such as being fought in Spain today, and colonial wars of liberation from imperialist subjugation, which—contrary to the abstract pacifist viewpoint—it would be a crime not to support.

This resolution was further implemented by the motions made to put an end to the equivocal position in which the party had been placed by unauthorized individual actions on the part of certain members in the "American League Against War and Fascism." My brief summary indicates why it was possible for both sections of the Left Wing to support the resolutions vigorously.

The opposing resolution, presented by Meta Berger and generally supported by the Wisconsin delegation, was fortunately defeated by an overwhelming majority. Its adoption would have committed the party to that essentially pro-war position propagated by the communists and the right wing socialists throughout the world, and indeed it was couched in the familiar language of the former.

It is most regrettable that the resolution so decisively adopted by the convention was diluted by the National Executive Committee to which it was referred for editorial revision. The highly important section on the Soviet Union was badly weakened and the section on pacifism, which, like other sections, re-

quired strengthening, was heavily watered down. If this was done in order not to offend believers in pacifism—and to pursue an opposite line would be stupid—the aim was laudable. The manner of its accomplishment, and the objective political result, are not, particularly in view of the dramatic events in Spain which so crushingly underscore the pathetic impotence of the pacifist viewpoint.

The second substantial advance made by the convention relates to the question of the "People's Front." The resolution on this subject presented by Glen Trimble and supported by about one-fourth of the delegates—those generally associated with the views advocated prior to the convention by the *Appeal*—was a rounded document which not only put forward the consistent Marxian position and traced the origins of "People's Frontism," showing that it is only a new form of class collaboration and social-patriotism, but dealt with it concretely as manifested in France, in Spain, in the United States and, specifically, with reference to our own party, in Wisconsin. Not content with a rejection of the theory and practice of "People's Frontism," the resolution presented the positive standpoint of the united working class front, and a class struggle policy which alone makes possible a fruitful alliance with sections of the middle class in the struggle against capitalist reaction and for Socialism.

This having been voted down, all Left Wing delegates joined in adopting the resolution presented by Herbert Zam, various amendments being submitted in an attempt to remedy its defects and ambiguities. (I am not aware of the exact disposition of these amendments by the N.E.C. to which all resolutions were referred.) The large vote cast for this resolution was above all a vote against the proposal of the Wisconsin delegation for a People's Front which, in sharp contrast with previous delegations from this state, appeared at the convention as perfervid advocates of virtually all the views advanced in recent times by the Communist Party. It is as much an instructive commentary upon the retrogressive development of the latter party as it is upon the position of the right wing in our own party, when it is noted that they see eye to eye, practically speaking, on all the decisive problems of the day.

The resolution adopted condemns "People's Frontism" in an unmistakable manner, even though some of its theoretical motivations are faulty. Also noteworthy is that it does not remain silent in face of the disgraceful record of the Blum government and the People's Front in France. However, it is not at all adequate in the passage which deals with the situation in Spain. Ambiguity and involved diplomatic language, especially at crucial stages of the class struggle, never serve to advance the labor movement. The fact that the Valencia government is directing an armed struggle against the fascists, does not even begin to resolve the basic problem. In his own way, Kerensky also conducted an armed war against the reactionary hordes of Kornilov — but his *political course* was not on that account any the less disastrous to the working class, or any more deserving of confidence.

The resolution gives aid and comfort to the entirely absurd notion entertained by many comrades that while a People's Front is not to be supported in comparatively "peaceful" periods—as in France or the United States today—it is perfectly all right when the fascists are actually on the march and civil war has begun. If this notion means anything, it means that class collaboration is to be

spurned when the class struggle is in a state of calm; but that as soon as the class struggle becomes intense, as soon as it offers the proletariat the opportunity to emancipate itself from capitalism, as soon as capitalism stakes its whole fate on the last desperate card of fascism—that is precisely the time when the class collaboration of People's Frontism is in order! That is precisely the time when the working class must renounce the struggle against capitalism! That is precisely the time when the working class, in effect, must give up its independent role and its independent class aims!

It is not enough for the party to dissociate itself from "People's Frontism" in the abstract, in theory. It ought to deal with it wherever it is concretely manifested. The intense interest of the American workers in the Spanish civil war is not accidental, and a party that lays claim to the leadership of the proletariat must be able to give clear-cut, honest answers to the most vital problems that concern it. To leave the question unanswered, or wrongly answered, for Spain, on the grounds that it is a far-off country anyway, is to leave the door wide open for the commission of the gravest errors in the United States, not only in the future, but now. A resolution in favor of the working class united front, and against the cruel deception which is called the "People's Front," is a good and imperatively necessary thing. It is not good, however, when the resolution passes over in silence the Wisconsin Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation, which the Wisconsin comrades correctly call a "People's Front" set-up and which they quite incorrectly support.

However that may be, the resolution gives the party and the Left Wing a basis from which to operate, and a hope for increased clarification and thoroughness in the future. It is especially important in a consideration of the attitude of the party towards a Labor or Farmer-Labor Party. In this respect, formally speaking (speaking, that is, from the standpoint of the formal position taken) the party did not take a step forward and introduced anything but clarity into its position. The resolution of Albert Goldman, which presented a vigorous left wing position against the theory that a revolutionary party should engage in initiating the formation of a reformist Labor party, was rejected by the convention. Yet the delegates did not even adopt the resolution of McDowell and Rasmussen, which at least sought to preserve the party from some of the more injurious consequences of Labor partyism by insisting upon the retention of an independent revolutionary party and upon a federated, mass, trade union base for the presumably emerging Labor party. Basically, this resolution fell victim to its own internal contradictions, and it was not accidental that its supporters withdrew it in favor of the Norman Thomas resolution which they sought to amend with sections from their own.

As matters stand, there is a violent conflict between the resolution of the convention in favor of a Labor party and the resolution against the People's Front. The former cannot be carried out without the latter being discarded. All the basic political characteristics of the People's Front, which are condemned as class collaborationism in the resolution on that subject, are at the same time the characteristics not only of the Labor Party as conceived on paper in the resolution relating to it, but also to the Labor and Farmer-Labor parties that are or may become concrete, living realities in this country. That the revo-

lutionary party may find it advisable to enter, on a federated, unfettered basis, into a reformist Labor party that is already established, is quite conceivable. That the party should initiate and form a reformist obstacle to revolutionary progress, merely in order to display its own superiority later on by contrast with the impotence and treachery of the "mass Labor party" for whose creation it is responsible—that remains inconceivable from the standpoint of Marxism and the interests of the workers.

Let us hope that the great responsibility which has been assigned the new National Executive Committee in relation to the party and Farmer-Labor parties, will be discharged not only by reference to the convention's Farmer-Labor Party resolution, but also (and primarily!) by reference to the infinitely more correct resolution on "People's Frontism." Guidance by the latter will avert many of the dangers that are inherent in the former.

Space limitations do not permit what would necessarily be favorable comment on the excellent discussion and the generally sound resolutions of the convention on such all-important questions as work in the trade unions, our attitude towards the C.I.O.-A.F.L. conflict, and the work among the unemployed in the Workers Alliance of America. If I say no more about it here it is because I assume that every live socialist understands the pre-eminent significance and value of these questions.

However, I permit myself to refer to two questions which the convention ignored. One is the Moscow Trials. Because this is a question which far transcends the interests of one man, Trotsky, or even of all the defendants put together, because the whole question of the Soviet Union and its evolution is involved, because both the honor and the future of the world labor movement are no less involved, it was incumbent upon the convention to devote adequate time to considering the question and to taking a firm position on it.

The other is the Spanish civil war. Although millions everywhere are excitedly absorbed by the Spanish events, the convention did not even adopt a clear resolution on the subject, both to express a considered view and as guidance to its members and supporters. The subsequent resolution of the N.E.C. urging support to the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy is, in my view, quite inadequate. To confine our activities to this field is to resign our function as an independent revolutionary Socialist Party. What is required of our party is not only support for the Debs Column, support for collections of food and money for the Loyalists, but a straightforward statement of support to those fighters in Spain who refuse to limit the struggle to a defense of capitalist democracy out of which fascism is born, and who work towards maintaining the class independence of the workers and towards the socialist revolution. These shortcomings of the convention can still be remedied by the National Executive Committee, which has all the neecssary powers to act. Let us hope it will do so.

It would be less than frank for me to write that the convention decisions and the new N.E.C. meet all the requirements of the present situation in which the party functions. Yet I believe that the N.E.C., which is called upon to direct the work of the party, and which has the responsibility for carrying out effectively the convention's decisions, deserves the loyal, disciplined, active support of the entire party membership. This is an elementary duty, but one

which does not eliminate the right and duty of the membership to fructify the development and the work of the party by critical thought and expression, that is, by such an attitude as has made possible the progress which the party has made up to now towards revolutionary Marxism. The convention was a stage in that progress. While bending every effort to continue the building of a strong Socialist Party in the United States, the left wing will at the same time seek to make it a party of consistent revolutionary Marxism.

III.

For a United Revolutionary Mass Party

Gus Tyler

THE Chicago Convention of the Socialist Party had one big job on its hands: to build a revolutionary party in America. And it did the job well!

To build a revolutionary Socialist Party, at this time, meant three things:

1. To lay down a line, in opposition to the forces of capitalism and as distinct from the reformist and communist line.
2. To root the party in mass organizations of workers and farmers and unemployed.
3. To maintain party unity by gradually, but persistently, solidifying all elements around the party line.

To me, these three elements complement one another. They do not contradict one another. They will have to be the three points by which the party must guide itself in the coming years in mapping its course: a united mass revolutionary party.

The Opportunists

Not all the delegates at the convention, however, believed that we can have such a party. Fortunately, in my opinion, they were in a minority; and divided among themselves, in a hopeless minority. Yet, their opinion must be recognized, even if it be in order to correct it.

One strong tendency insisted upon placing theory in opposition to practice. If we insist upon our revolutionary notions, they contended, then we shall never be able to do effective mass work. Some of these comrades even saw the difference between revolutionary theory and day by day practice springing from a social cleavage: intellectuals versus proletarians.

This separation of theory and practice is not something new in the socialist movement. It is old stuff. It is just old-fashioned opportunism, which in Russia they called "economism," in Germany "sächlichkeit," in England "gradualism," and now in our party "realism."

It is opportunism, because its main guide is not the long time interests of the whole class but the momentary whims current in the movement. It is opportunism, because it places numbers above principle, only to discover, *in a crisis*, that all these supposed numbers were just zeros standing behind a zero. It is not really realism, because while frittering away its energy in erecting a giant house of cards it never seriously devotes itself to the drab, but real, task of laying a firm revolutionary foundation which can stand up under social shock.

A Unified Party

Just as there are elements which erred on the opportunist side, however, so there

are elements which erred on the purist side. And, strangely enough, some of the very worst purists are also the opportunists.

This sounds impossible. But it is really so, and quite understandably too. When opportunist elements see the party "growing" too slowly, they tend to grow somewhat impatient with those "revolutionaries," who by insisting upon their damn "principles" are holding back the party growth. These revolutionaries must be cleared out of the way, purged!

Very seldom is such a fight conducted in political terms, especially in a party such as ours wherein the membership is overwhelmingly revolutionary in its sentiments. Instead of real programmatic attacks, one hears about clearing the party of "factionalism," the "unassimilatibles," the "sectarians." And strangely enough, just these purist opportunists become the very worst *factionalists*, would reduce the party to an impotent *sect*, and by their actions make themselves the least *assimilatible* section of the party.

Such an element is never a danger to a party when in a minority. Its following can be won over to the party line by constant education. Its ranks are decimated even further as the party diligently turns to the task of mass work. And that is what will happen in our party!

Such a purist element, whether of the left or right, is really dangerous, however, when it controls party machinery. Then it wields such machinery for purely factional purposes, substituting charges for argument, and the grievance committee for logic. And the "right" purists are even worse than the "left," because the former have fewer principles and hence must lean more heavily upon machine politics.

The Convention Mood

This convention was distinguished by the absence of many things common at previous conventions.

First, it was not dominated by New Yorkers or by the New York issue. One could feel a national party. And every attempt to force New York issues on the convention as *the* chief issue in the party was quite properly spurned by the convention.

Second, there was no solid Wisconsin or New York delegation. Wisconsin, which used to vote in block, this time displayed a number of tendencies. And New York City, which used to vote either all Old Guard or all Militant, was now healthily divided about fifty-fifty as between administration and opponents, with the up-state delegates throwing a clear majority to the opposition in Local New York.

Third, the "one-plankers," who in the past occupied some of the time of the convention with their wierd get-Socialism-quick proposals, were almost altogether absent. (Perhaps two were present and neither spoke for his proposals.)

Fourth, it was a convention without hysteria. Of course, there were attempted stampedes, started by two hysterical speeches apiece from Wisconsin and New York by the convention minority. And there was the usual sprinkling of threats. But with the exception of a handful of loyal clacks, nobody paid much attention to these strange outbursts. The delegates made a mental note: "Out of order!"

It was a convention of serious comrades, matured in mass work, acquainted with socialist theory, determined about what they wanted, cynical about phrases, annoyed with buffoonery, and disgusted with demagoguery! It was—how shall we say—earthy!

A Revolutionary Line

At no past convention of the Socialist

Party within the last decade perhaps was the level of political debate so high. The debate on the questions of war and the people's front was as informative as it was serious.

These two questions which headed the agenda set the tone for the convention.

The war question was first. And in a sense, symbolically so.

"Who is a revolutionary and who is not?" is not always most easily determined by an examination of one's abstract theory. Sometimes the best way to know the character of a party is by its stand on concrete questions. And from time to time history provides just such test questions.

In our present period, the war question is *the* test question. The last war ripped the working class movement apart. So will a new war. With us will stand all those who oppose capitalist war; with the enemy will stand all those who, under cover of anti-war slogans, are ready to support a capitalist war.

Comrades who accept the present Socialist Party stand on war, after having understood it through debate, are those men and women of granite out of which a revolutionary party is chiselled. They will not crumble in the grip of the first new crisis. They will become the rallying points of the struggle against capitalism around whom millions will gather as the war drives the masses to desperation. They will be the vanguard of the working class and the standard bearers of the social revolution.

It is significant that the attack upon the war resolution arose less from political confusion than from a dangerous defeatist spirit.

"The resolution against war is all right," we heard. "But inasmuch as we are too weak to make a revolution against capitalism now or even to halt the war now, why bother with it. Let's see now where we should throw our strength to get someting out of it."

More than one comrade approached every problem from this defeatist viewpoint. Such comrades make the terrible error of imagining that there will, someday, be a *big* revolutionary party come into being without effort. They fail to see that a revolutionary party must be hammered into being by laborious, tiring, unceasing work along socialist lines. *They fail to see, too, that without such a party there can never be a revolution. And they finally fail to see that such a party, even if it does not count its membership in millions but merely in thousands, is capable of winning power and building Socialism.* In a period of crisis, such as one attendant upon a war, the masses move almost instinctively; they even seize power spontaneously. What is needed is a party, a core of revolutionaries, to crystalize this development, to solidify it, to **hold power and wield it.** Comrades without this perspective will always go through life with a defeatist air, gaining satisfaction through the apparent strength of an inflated opportunist policy.

These comrades took a devilish delight in every reverse of the party; they recited a drop in membership with the gurgle of watering mouths; they repeated their little song and dance on every occasion, no matter the subject. But they had absolutely no effect upon the delegates.

The delegates carried the war resolution—sweepingly. And they followed with an equally firm rejection of the concept of Popular Frontism.

The resolution on the Popular Front, which was carried only in draft form, for lack of time to hear the committee report, rejected the idea of the Popular Front both in general and in the concrete, both in France under Blum and

Spain under Azana.

Here the opposition to the resolution ran along three lines. There were those who thought that the People's Front was a very good thing for the working class, a way of winning power. There were those who said it was a bad thing, but a necessary evil; and, finally, there were those who said they were opposed to taking a stand on the question.

The convention rejected all these proposals. First of all, this convention refused to dodge the question. Then it proceeded to reject the People's Front, because it worked against the best interests of the working class. And finally it denied that it was a necessary evil in order to fight fascism.

Mass Work

A revolutionary political line is of value only when it is carried into mass work.

In doing this, our party has to break with an ancient tradition. It has to break not only with the line but also the method of our reformist past. The convention showed that real progress has been made in the last year in rooting the Socialist Party in the masses.

The real question here is: What is socialist influence?

By Old Guard standards, socialist influence consisted of being on friendly terms with trade union leaders. Whether or not they were party members made little difference. They did what they pleased anyhow.

The Old Guard was not opposed to having rank and file trade unionists in the party. They even welcomed them. But, they were definitely opposed to disciplined fraction work in trade unions, to laying down a socialist line for mass organizations, and fighting for it.

The heart of our mass work, as laid down by the Chicago convention, consists of two aspects:

1. Fraction work.
2. An independent socialist line.

The richest discussion on mass work was in connection with the Workers Alliance, the organization of the unemployed. Dozens of comrades, from dozen of states, participated. They knew what building socialist influence meant. To them it meant going to the workers with a socialist line and program, and not just climbing for high seats.

In the discussion on the Workers' Alliance, too, these comrades described in practice what is meant by an *independent* socialist line. In the Alliance it meant constant struggle against the policies of the Communist Party, with their bureaucratic methods, their stifling of union democracy, their kow-towing to Roosevelt. It meant surrendering office, when necessary, in order to go to the rank and file and fight against class collaborationist policies.

It is interesting to note that just as the healthiest discussion came from rank and file activists who held or won their positions by independent fraction work, so some of the sickliest speeches came from comrades who held high office to which they rose—without independent fraction work. These latter comrades had nothing good to contribute, and in anger against those comrades who were firmly pressing on for discipline to apply to highest and lowest, lost their temper and lost their reason enough to forget their role as dignified party leaders.

The reports of our field workers were a real source of cheer to every delegate who came to build the party. We can honestly say that our resolution on mass work will mean something, because we have the comrades who intend to make it mean something.

The Labor Party

In this discussion on the Labor Party, the party's position in its role as the vanguard of the working class was illuminated.

The present movement for a Labor Party was viewed as progressive in character, as breaking the workers from the capitalist parties. As such, this movement should gain the support of the party.

Should a Labor Party come into being nationally, along independent class lines, the Socialist Party would join it and work within it.

But at all times the party must maintain its identity as a separate organization with its separate program.

Here, too, then, the convention held firmly to its belief that the Socialist Party had to be built as an independent force, but at the same time it must take advantage of the live currents in the labor movement.

Party Unity

The "Daily Worker" reports on the convention—with their most amusing chagrin—are very informative on this point.

First, says the "Daily Worker," the Trotskyites are now more solidly in the Socialist Party than ever.

Second, the Zam-Tyler "Trotskyite-conciliators" have a majority in the N. E.C. which will make expulsions more diffcult.

Third, the "realistic" elements in the Socialist Party who announced that they would expel the Trotskyites, and who in private caucus declared this their intent, did not have the nerve to make a motion to expel.

The article of Howard Bronson in the "New Masses," written by some Communist Party spy in the Socialist Party, is fairly informative on this subject. And in a curious sort of way, the "Daily Worker" and the "New Masses" are about right in their analysis.

Nobody *dared* to speak of expelling anybody, because the overwhelming body of delegates were more ready to expel anybody who did make such an insane proposal than they were to expel the Trotskyites. So the handful of bitter enders laid low—and waited!

Roundabout moves to squeeze the newcomers out of the party were shunted aside by the convention. The delegates were not going to be kidded. They wanted unity!

The National Executive Committee

The N.E.C. was elected on the basis of a common slate, brought in by all groups. The virtually unanimous election of this slate is a sign that the party can—and must—go ahead under its leaddership. There will be differences. There always have been, and there always should be differences in a revolutionary party. But, the N.E.C. can command the confidence of a sufficiently large body of party members to win real, heartfelt support for its work.

It is unfortunate, but it must be told to our comrades, that even after the slate was agreed upon, nearly a dozen leading and responsible comrades from New York and more than that from Wisconsin cut the slate. These people are the would-be anti-factionalists. Factionalists to the end! It is to be hoped that this parting convention gesture is not an indication of their attitude toward the N.E.C. and the national organization.

Barring this unfortunate incident, the delegates—more than 90% of them—expressed in their vote for the N.E.C. a desire for a united party: For a united and revolutionary party. The N.E.C. has their mandate; to the membership it must give the directives to make our party also a mass party!

Five to Four

David P. Berenberg

I.

LIKE a bad boy deprived of the right to play base-ball because he has not done his home-work, the Supreme Court has recently been embarrassingly eager "to be good," and to prove that it can be "liberal." In the decision on the Washington Minimum Wage Law it reversed the stand taken earlier in the case of the New York State Minimum Wage Law. It was Justice Roberts who was suddenly overtaken by "liberalism" and who changed a 5 to 4 vote against a minimum of decency in employment conditions, to a 5 to 4 vote in favor of the elementary decencies.

It was Justice Roberts again, whose attack of "liberalism" seems to have a degree of staying-power, who swung the Court over to the Wagner Act. Now, by the mystic vote of 5 to 4, the Wagner Act is constitutional.

The sudden rash of "liberal" decisions, by a vote of 5 to 4, after a nightmare sequence of reactionary decisions (also 5 to 4) calls for an explanation.

The one explanation that stands out like a sore thumb is that the Supreme Court, and those whom it represents are thoroughly frightened. The avalanche of anti-Landon votes in November was disquieting to those whose usurpation of economic power, and whose mismanagement of power, cause them to fear the "mob." Their fear was intensified to the nth degree when the President made public his plan to reform the Supreme Court.

It would be a grave error to underestimate the depth of the panic that seized financiers, industrialists, merchants and their servants and satellites in the law, in journalism and in public life when the sanctity of the Court was questioned. Their inarticulate howls of anguish were genuine. The arguments they raised in defense of their citadel might be faulty; there might have been more fury than reason in their tirades; yet it must be clearly understood that they were not putting up a sham battle. They were, and are, fighting against incalculable forces, in defense of their privileges. Quite rightly they see in the Supreme Court the final line of defense against "red ruin" and "anarchy"—in other words against the demands of labor.

Henry of Navarre thought that "Paris was worth a mass!" American capital thinks that a sop of "liberalism" is a cheap price to pay for a Supreme Court in its present form and with its present powers.

The President has said that the recent "liberal" decisions will not swerve him from his course; that he will press his program for the reconstruction of the Court along the lines widely publicized. He may so intend. The question that arises is whether he will now have the following in the Senate to enable him to push his bill through. It was the plain strategy of the Court, and of Wall Street, to undermine his strength in the Senate by making it appear unnecessary to change a "liberal court." It has also been an open secret ever since the Pres-

ident broached his plan, that many even of his staunchest supporters in his own party are terror-stricken at the thought of "packing" the Court. They would have done his bidding had the Wagner Act been decapitated. What will they do now?

It has been suggested that the President never seriously intended to push his court reform measure. Some shrewd observers of his methods argue that he has now attained his objectives. He intended to use the threat of reform as a club to make the Supreme Court behave. It has walked into the trap he set. He will call off his cohorts. Some even suggest that he will now re-enact an NRA, an AAA and a Guffey Bill in somewhat altered form, confident that a chastened and "liberalized" court will now find them entirely constitutional.

II.

All this is conjecture. We shall perhaps have the answer to these riddles before these lines appear in print. Whether Roosevelt pursues his court reform, or drops it, the Supreme Court stands before the country stripped of much of its glamor and prestige. A court that so patently follows the election returns, and that so clearly yields to pressure is *not* above politics. This is a positive gain. It is good for American workers to rid themselves of the myth that the courts are "above the battle" and impartial.

It is good for people to ponder on the nature of a five to four decision. Not only have we been taught to venerate the Supreme Court, but the aura of holiness has been thrown about the word "constitutional." To say of a law "it is constitutional" has too often sufficed to pass it, however sinister its intent. Conversely, many a law demanded by the times has been damned because it was not "constitutional." Now it stands revealed for all to see that the "constitutionality" of a law does not depend on any quality it may contain; it does not depend on whether it comes within the limits of a definite provision of a fixed document; or even upon a definite precedent or principle of law. It depends in the end on what nine men think; in many cases (as in these recent 5 to 4 decisions) it has depended on what *one* man thinks.

There is nothing new in this discovery, except that while it has heretofore been limited to students of the law, to political theoreticians, to the radicals of all persuasions, it is now revealed to the man on the street. Now all may know that our proud boast of "government by law and not by men" is empty. We *do* have government by men. Often by *one* man.

III.

In the light of the recent Supreme Court decisions, the purely temporary and opportunist nature of the Roosevelt proposals becomes more strikingly evident. To increase the Court from nine to fifteen would, perhaps, give us for a time a more "liberal" court. Such a court, even more responsive to election figures, to the popular mood, would presumably validate all of the Roosevelt program. It might even be ready to approve a more far-reaching program of reform of capitalist procedure than the President has yet proposed. It must not therefore be assumed that the enlarged Supreme Court would approve any program of legislation that touches the foundations of private property.

The Supreme Court remains the custodian of the constitution. The constitution and the age-old precedents that have grown up around it remain the same. The judges of the Supreme Court will in future be men of the same type as now, men trained in long service to

capital, to the greater accumulations of capital. Capital may believe that changes in the Court will shake the foundations of its system. Capital has always been timid—not to say craven! But its system has proven stronger than its fears. More, its hold on its institutions of government has proven stronger even than its system.

Capital, a little disgruntled now, will discover that the Court is still the servant of property. Some of the forms of property-control may change. Fundamentals do not change merely because the Court has six more members.

Many of the discussions of the Court overlook the important fact that the whole controversy has turned on conflicting views of the constitution within the framework of the capitalist system. The question posed is this: "*Has Congress the power to regulate industry in the public welfare in the degree and in the manner in which such regulation is already exercised by the states?*" The emphasis, be it noted, is in the increase of the *Federal* power, not on any *new* powers of government over industry. No threat to the capitalist system is involved.

Capital will learn to adjust itself to a change from state-wide to nation-wide handling of its problems. It will persuade itself that the power to regulate industry and labor on a nation-wide scale is both necessary and profitable. It will discover that, at times, it pays greater dividends to bargain collectively than to risk a strike. Or that it pays greater dividends to support old-age pensions and unemployment insurance than to reduce taxes. It may also discover that the reverse is true. In either case, whether it be in the mood to raise labor's standards or to reduce them, it will have power to act on a nation-wide scale.

Labor's need to organize on a nation-wide basis leads it to support those moves that increase the power of the federal government. Labor's situation in this respect will persist, and in consequence, it will continue to favor federal legislation over labor conditions. It will welcome, too, Supreme Court decisions that make such legislation possible.

Those, however, who imagine that these measures, these increases of federal power, these court decisions, or even the reformation of the Supreme Court will liquidate the class struggle, or even tend to alleviate it, will have a rude awakening. On the contrary! The Supreme Court gives Congress the power to legislate over labor and industry engaged in inter-state commerce. For the moment that power is being exercised by a government more or less friendly to labor. It may be exercised by a reactionary government. The class struggle is therefore only transferred to another level.

But this, too, is a gain. It tends to strip away another of the disguises which has concealed the nature of the struggle. It tends to bring the struggle, on a nation-wide scale, into the open.

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The Underground Movement in Germany

Translated from an article, by a German comrade, which appeared in the "Kampf."

THE increased German aggressiveness arouses new interests in the German domestic opposition. Four years after the defeat of democracy in Germany, the power of the anti-fascist movement is an unknown quantity. The strength of the "German socialist movement" in the present situation is questionable. If we were to judge its strength by its fragments and by those who were left behind in the emigration of German socialists, the balance after four years would be entirely negative. But there are certain indications of improvement.

The progress of the movement is entirely inadequate in relation to the tasks which the German socialist emigrés may be called upon to face. But the development of the socialist movement in Germany itself has been less retarded than among the emigrés. Little as one may speak about an organized movement within Germany without falling victim anew to dangerous self-deception, (under a fascist regime the organization itself has quite definite and very narrow limits which can be widened only in case of a political crisis in the regime) it is certain that the four years of national socialism have brought about a thorough-going shift in the main strata of the German working class. The long period of depression which followed the defeat of the movement by the national socialist conquest of power, is clearly approaching its end. There are numerous symptoms indicating this change. If we are to understand and properly to evaluate the actual change which is now beginning, we must briefly recapitulate the history of the first four years of the illegal movement.

I. The Coup d'etat and the Illusions of Legality

In the 18th Brumaire Marx portrays the defeat of the second French republic by the adventurer Louis Bonaparte and his crew. Silone and other historians of Italian fascism register similar experiences of Italian liberalism of all tendencies. Mussolini's first cabinet seemed to him a mere intermezzo, a parliamentary episode, a storm that would pass by. The history of the defeat of German democracy has not yet been written. But our memories are still fresh. They tell us that the destruction of the German republic by nationalist socialism is the last of its kind in history. Has this defeat brought about one important effect? Has it saved the third French republic, Spain and other democracies?

The German defeat found none of the democratic factors more unprepared than the German labor movement. The unions, the Social-Democratic Party and the Communist Party, the splinter groups, all were alike unprepared for the fascist victory and its epoch-making consequences. It is hard for German, Austrian or Italian socialists to realize this fully even today. German fascism marched with its army in the sight of the whole world. But even after it had achieved power in January, 1933, the German democracy, and in particular, the German labor movement doubted the

strength, the gravity and the totalitarian character of this conquest of power.

For example, even after January, the left and the right of the German labor movement of 1933 clung to the concept of the continuity of democracy; clung to it even after the coalition of the "National government" was formed. Hugenberg was proclaimed the true victor. His four key portfolios and the nationalists connections with the Reichswehr were to be the barriers against fascism, even after fascism had already begun to assert its new power. The self-deceptions of the social-democrats are well-known. They placed their hopes in the legal Reichstag election of March 6, 1933. The energetic elimination of all republican officials from high office, the occupation of the police precincts, the orders to shoot, the establishment of the secret police, the suppression of the press and even the inauguration of open terror after the crime of the Reichstag fire could not shake their belief in the continuity of law. Even on March 30, Wels resigned from the Bureau of the Labor and Socialist International and on April 1st the executive of the party justified this step with the statement that "the decisions of the Bureau of the LSI as well as its political and organizational measures have been adopted without the participation of the German Social-Democracy. The German Social-Democracy can assume no responsibility for decisions so arrived at." On April 27, a national conference elected a new party executive and formulated measures for continued work within the framework of legality. As late as May, the socialist youth of Berlin was excluded from the party because it tried "illegal stunts" instead of submitting to the maintenance of legality as directed by the party.

In June, when the union headquarters had already been occupied, and when the leaders of the unions and thousands of party functionaries had been arrested, the Loebe group tried to distinguish itself from the emigrant part of the executive, and to claim the seat of the executive for Germany. On June 19th Loebe called a conference at Berlin which elected a new executive consisting of Westfal, Stelling, Rinner and Kuenstler, which alone was to be the responsible party leadership. The conference expressly rejected all utterances of the emigrés as irresponsible. On June 22nd the party was officially dissolved. On the 23, Loebe, Stelling, Westfal, and Kuenstler were arrested.

As with the party, so with the unions. The German federation of trade unions carried on negotiations with a treacherous group of national socialists, which first achieved the exclusion of Jewish and of Left secretaries, and then the return of millions of marks belonging to the unions which had been sent abroad. While the executive of the Federation of Trade Unions was trying (for twenty thousand marks) to get State's Attorney Schmidt to render an opinion on its legal continuity under the new regime, and while arranging for May 1, 1933, a demonstration of peace with the new regime, and against the class struggle, orders had already been given, which resulted, on the second of May, in the forcible removal of twenty thousand functionaries of the old unions, in the forcible occupation of union headquarters, and in the arrest of the heads of the unions. But the left wing of the party, which here and there had begun to change its tactics and to adopt illegal measures was virtually unprepared to act effectively in the new situation. As early as February, for example, a number of "Notes on the Present Situation" appeared, which was issued within the movement by the executive of the old *Miles* organization con-

taining an essay which described Hitler's conquest of power as a "rear-guard battle of the reaction," and which proceeded on the assumption that the democratic elements in the coalition, i.e., Hugenberg and the German nationalists, were bound to control it. To be sure this evaluation met with resistance, but it is symptomatic of the general disorientation which at that time prevailed, even within one of the most progressive groups of the party. In the Communist Party there could be no comprehension of these new basic trends, since at that time, in its sectarian phase, it had already discovered a victory for fascism in the Bruening system. When Hitler came to power, it outdid itself in self-deception about its own invincibility.

These miscalculations of the leadership were only the expression of the demoralization of important groups among the socialist masses. There were individual critical elements, without influence in the movement as a whole, which recognized the situation in time, but which were too helpless, too isolated and powerless to launch, in time, even a single illegal effort to adjust itself to the progressive elements in the movement. In the course of a few weeks the liquidation of the democratic parties followed upon the liquidation of the socialist labor organizations. A process which took years in Italy, was completed, at least superficially, in Germany within a few months. The organizations could not withstand this tempo of destruction. In the first months local centers of resistance were formed. Each party district, each division, each section of the apparatus of one of the old organizations continued its activity in its old way. Several months of great activity of the branches of organizations, manifestos, and programs, multigraphed leaflets, propaganda and a flourishing of old and new splinter groups—that was the beginning of the illegal work. There was so little understanding of the new situation, that at the time of the November plebiscite, after the withdrawal of the third Reich from the League of Nations, the 93% vote for Hitler gave the first sudden and clear view of things as they were. That was the first low point. The first great wave of liquidationism set in. Millions of former adherents of the socialist labor movement began at this time to realize, for the first time, that democracy was at an end, that the movement had been destroyed, and that its return within a short period was out of the question.

This in a few words is the history of the defeat and of the breakdown. Under the circumstances there could be no effective defense against the brutal efforts at annihilations.

2. The First Efforts at Forming an Illegal Movement

From that point on the movement continued to flourish best in the prisons, in the concentration camps and in the penitentiaries. The following year, to be sure, brought a certain revival, after the first far-reaching shock, of the remnants of the organizations which had withstood the first attack. German national socialism experienced its own great crisis. This culminated in the events of June 30th, 1934. In spite of all historic and social differences it may best be compared with the Matteotti crisis of Italian fascism, but it must be looked upon as a final crisis. The uncouth powers of the German "front of the second revolution" had to be overthrown. On the other side was the obscure illegal resistance of the "co-ordinated" bourgeois organizations. With the impulse of these confused radical—national socialist and bourgeois opposition elements—parts of

the surviving old labor organizations were also lured into action. Old ties were formed anew. The regime, much occupied with the "fine gentlemen of the reaction" and with its own opposition, had to grant a sort of truce in which the first illegal socialist circles came into being, however not yet fully realizing the new situation, and still consisting of the old personnel.

If one wishes to study the illusion about the crisis within the regime reduced to its narrowest term, we must refer to the manifesto which the Social-Democratic Party executive in exile in Prague issued on the eve of June 30, 1934. It contains talk of the insurrection against the fascist regime in Germany and of the dawn of a new day. This is merely a formulation of the errors in which the illegal movement itself was enmeshed in this phase. The rapid victory of the regime after June 30th, the combination of the presidential office with the party leadership after Hindenburg's death, and the nationalist victory in the Saar vote at the beginning of 1935 choked off the first wave of illegal attempts at resistance.

From this time until the march into the Rhineland, all efforts at organizing with inadequate means and all efforts to continue work with inadequate concepts were wiped out. The processes of this period exposed the schemes of the disruption. The shrunken remnants of the old labor organizations, which no longer could control the power of their own political initiative, and which no longer had a literature and informational service of their own, sought contact with the newly formed committees of the parties and of the unions abroad. This is the period in which the illegal organizations carried on, in the main, a distribution of literature. But with the distribution of literature printed outside the country, an illusion was spread, outside the country, about the degree of freedom of motion within. Agents of the Gestapo appeared at the secret addresses. The day of the mass raids was over. The more carefully therefore were contacts traced out. 1935 was a year of systematic destruction of the early efforts at organization of groups which had survived within Germany and which had formed contacts abroad.

All organizations were destroyed at this time. First the central organization of the communists was wiped out. The Communist Party took inadequate notice of the new situation. Outside of Germany it reported its invincibility, it polemicized against the first signs of a qualified conception of a movement adapted to the situation. It excommunicated those who were critical of the senseless exposure of members ready for all sacrifices. It made frantic efforts to maintain its mass activity under the formula "Now more than ever."

The remnants of the social-democratic organization sank into inactivity or sought support in bourgeois labor organizations, in card clubs or sport clubs; they became less and less political and accepted associations with whom they could maintain personal contact, but no organized political lives. The worthless efforts of the organization at the borders, which were chiefly limited to the function of news reporters, were destroyed no less vigorously than the earlier efforts to distribute literature. In the discussion circles of the younger people and of the theorizing remnants of the splinter groups an atmosphere of helpless sectarianism spread, of struggles for leadership in the exiled organizations, of factionalism. Little positive Marxian work of preparation was done. True liquidationism made itself felt. Theoretical justifications for the necessity

at the time of the Rossoni crisis, in the great "correction" of 1928-29, when a strong activization of the fascists trade unions of Italy forced Mussolini to destroy them and to depose Rossoni. As at that time in Italy, so today in Germany, the situation indicates such measures. But that does not detract from the significance of the process.

The development of this crisis under fascism is important in estimating anti-fascist impulses. This is particularly true in Germany with its curious contradictions. Outside of the factories, here and there, a skillful and surely dangerous agitation of the workers, adapted to the ideology and the official phraseology of the regime is getting under way, utilizing the slogans of the regime, according to the method of "application of service regulations." In the factories and outside of the factories, trustworthy men are beginning to stand up, to be sure, greatly to their peril. They are chiefly men of the old movement who have become, by their persistence, and by their survival of the terror, a sort of focal point. In general the fear of persecution and the fear of discovery have become much weaker. In spite of the new and continuing mass arrests a mood is spreading, which one functionary formulated as follows: "We are again like a family. The Nazis know us. . . . One can trust his friend. Only where they systematically put spies among us can they get at us at all. This is already something more than trade unionism under a fascist system."

All these features point to the slow awakening of a new class movement. Its roots are in part permanent and in part of a temporary nature. The strongest actual impulses lie, as I have said above, in the international outlook. When the international peoples' front suffered defeat, when the first series of defeats after Badajoz occurred in the fall of 1936, the momentary extraordinarily increased interest in the international rise of the movement turned, without much visible effect, once more into an elementary interest in the 11.80 marks with which, according to Mr. Ley's recommendations, a man can easily get along. The upswing was barely interrupted. It is the sinking standards of living, the fixed low wages, in the face of this increase in business, which gives a particularly radical tinge to this activism.

There is a certain common experience slowly realized, with the character of the fascist prison state and with its responsibility for the new social facts, for the increased exploitation in the third Reich in spite of all wage differentials. A second decisive factor, but already a political factor, is the growing insight into the catastrophic war perspective of the regime. There is frequent reminder of war preparations in the present raw material difficulties and in the fantastically increased war production. The increase and adventures of the Third Reich and, not least, the Spanish intervention, increased men's consciousness of the coming war. Here there is, of course, an element of new illusions and errors. The new feeling of power which activates the illegal movement today, if they begin to think of themselves as the representatives of the coming Fourth Reich after the inevitable defeat of the Third Reich, has a real historical perspective. In the tempo of early war expectations new illusions may arise.

But if the insight into the contradictions, which must in the end force this regime into collision with imperialist opponents, is correct and it must be, then illusory perspectives can be more easily corrected. Furthermore, it is the European People's Front movement, and

in this People's Front movement, above all, Spain, which activates the movement. Events in Spain, with their ups and downs, with their revolutionary expectations, according to all reports, deeply affect the main strata of the German workers. The communist slogan for unity and the people's front has also awakened hope and sympathy. The formation of the French and Spanish People's Front has strengthened this sympathy. There is an increase of real understanding of the united front movement even among former obstinate exponents of the split of the party; a general increase of friendship among anti-fascists and or personal contacts is evident. All these are mere beginnings. The outbreak of war might once more choke them in a new wave of chauvinism. But the first visible defeats of the regime would emphasize these features. Preliminary campaigns such as Italy and Japan have successfully waged in Abyssinia and in Manchuria, are conceivable for Germany with partial success, but they are much more difficult of attainment. The Spanish adventure proves this. Another colonial effort or an adventure in southeastern Europe could demonstrate this tomorrow. Dependent on visible success, the Third Reich must seek such adventures again and again. Even a serious defeat in such a preliminary war would open up improved chances for a proletarian revolution in a relatively near future.

It is evident even today that the omnipotence of fascist imperialism in Germany—whose creation was bound up with the fall of the old labor movement and with the deep inner depression even of the most advanced sections of the proletariat—faces definite difficulties in its external expansion and in its inner consolidation. We understand, therefore, why in Germany, in contrast to Italy, the beginning of a new class movement of great potentiality makes itself felt very much earlier. All this may, it must be understood, disappear again. It depends upon the visible fascist successes and, conversely, upon the visibly increasing chances of a revolutionary Germany. But preceding periods have shown, that in spite of all similarities, the laws of motion of two working classes in two different fascist countries differ, as the balance of forces of these countries themselves differ in a given historical situation.

A WORD ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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